

CONTACT:
Christie St. Clair
[[HYPERLINK "mailto:StClair.Christie@epa.gov"](mailto:StClair.Christie@epa.gov)]
202-564-2880

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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U.S. EPA Releases Follow-Up Water, Sediment Monitoring Results Related to the 2015 Gold King Mine Incident

(Washington, DC) – The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency today released new surface water and sediment sampling results relating to the Aug. 5, 2015, Gold King Mine release.

Sampling results indicate that metals of concern --- including arsenic, cadmium, lead and mercury --- were below recreational screening levels in both surface water and sediment. The study used conservative recreational screening levels, assuming adults and children receive all of their daily water intake from the river over a 64-day period.

Results also showed the presence of several metals that are trace nutrients - calcium, magnesium, potassium and sodium – were above pre-event conditions at several locations; however, these metals do not have recreational screening levels due to their low toxicity.

The results are the outcome of sampling EPA performed in October and November in accordance with the September 2015 draft "Post Gold King Mine Release Incident: Conceptual Monitoring Plan for Surface Water, Sediment and Biology." Somewhat broader in scope than the initial emergency sampling and under the post-release monitoring plan, EPA is examining water quality, sediment quality, biological community and fish tissue under a variety of flow conditions at 26 sites in Cement Creek, the Animas and San Juan rivers and the upper section of Lake Powell within Colorado, Southern Ute Reservation, New Mexico, Ute Mountain Ute Reservation, the Navajo Nation and Utah.

The next sampling event will take place at the end of March, followed by additional sampling in June and in the fall. EPA will also coordinate with local jurisdictions to sample the rivers during storm events in the summer.

The Aug. 5, 2015 event released a plume of about 3 million gallons of water. By comparison, the average annual water discharge from the Gold King Mine and three nearby mines is approximately 330 million gallons per year, although fluctuations occur because of precipitation and other events that change water flow rates or volume. As a result, metal concentrations in water and sediment may fluctuate.

EPA appreciates states', tribes' and communities' concerns regarding the spring runoff's potential to mobilize sediments deposited by the Gold King Mine release and decades of drainage from the many Silverton-area mines. In addition to post-incident monitoring, the agency is continuing other efforts to address the Gold King Mine release. These efforts include:

- EPA is providing \$2 million in funding to support states' and tribes' long-term monitoring plans. Utah, New Mexico, Southern Ute Indian Tribe, Ute Mountain Ute Tribe, Navajo Nation, and Colorado may apply those funds to spring monitoring and preparedness planning as well.
- EPA is also supporting a stakeholder-driven effort – called the Animas-San Juan Preparedness Plan – to coordinate monitoring efforts. The group's latest meeting on Feb. 29 was attended by the states of New Mexico, Utah and Colorado, the Southern Ute and Navajo Nation, and local jurisdictions. EPA is providing the group with technical and infrastructure support to help stakeholders better coordinate their monitoring plans and share environmental data.

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- The interim water treatment plant, installed in November 2015, continues to treat ongoing acid mine drainage being discharged from the Gold King Mine (GKM). The plant, which replaced the temporary treatment ponds that were put in after the August 2015 release to treat mine water discharge, will be operated over the winter, with removal work resuming this summer. EPA is still assessing the appropriate overall duration of the plant's operations.
- As part of our continuing discussions over longer term efforts to address wide-spread acid mine drainage in the Upper Animas Watershed, the EPA will continue to work with local, tribal, nongovernmental and other stakeholders on water treatment options and other long-term solutions to the impacts from mining in the Upper Animas Watershed. Regardless of what solutions these discussions lead to, downstream communities will not be asked to pay for water treatment.
- Short-term removal operations at the Gold King Mine will resume as early as possible in the late spring/early summer, dependent upon road conditions and any remaining avalanche hazards around the mine (which can extend into May). We expect the primary objective at this time to be completing work to stabilize the first 60 feet of the adit and constructing a temporary flow control structure. The extent to which additional rehabilitation work is continued remains to be determined.
- To address the legacy of acid mine drainage in the region, the agency is currently considering state and local authorities' request to list the Upper Bonita Peak Mining District, which includes the Gold King Mine site, on the Superfund National Priorities List.

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To view the latest sampling results, visit [[HYPERLINK "http://www.epa.gov/goldkingmine/data-gold-king-mine-response"](http://www.epa.gov/goldkingmine/data-gold-king-mine-response)] [EXACT LINK TK

For more information on the draft monitoring plan, visit [[HYPERLINK "http://www.epa.gov/goldkingmine/september-17-2015-epa-seeks-input-draft-monitoring-plan-following-gold-king-mine"](http://www.epa.gov/goldkingmine/september-17-2015-epa-seeks-input-draft-monitoring-plan-following-gold-king-mine)].

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